

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO
MAGISTRATES:

A

S E R M O N, *g.*

OCCASIONED BY THE LATE

RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM,

PREACHED AT THE

KING'S WEIGH-HOUSE, EAST-CHEAP,

O N

LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 24, 1794.

WITH A

PREFIXED ADDRESS TO THE PUBLICK,

INTENDED TO REMOVE THE REPROACH, LATELY
FALLEN ON PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

By JOHN CLAYTON.

AND SEEK THE PEACE OF THE CITY, WHITHER I HAVE
CAUSED YOU TO BE CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVES:
AND PRAY UNTO THE LORD FOR IT: FOR IN THE
PEACE THEREOF SHALL YE HAVE PEACE.

JER. XXXIX. 7.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N:

SOLD BY C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY; AND
J. MATTHEWS, IN THE STRAND,

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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JOHN AT BIRMINGHAM

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LONG WENCH HOUSE EAST CHURCH

ON

WEDNESDAY MORNING JULY 24. 1792

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED

BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.



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A N

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLICK.

THE truths and duties of religion may frequently be enforced with peculiar advantage, by a suitable regard to providential occurrences.

The late unhappy Riots at *Birmingham* gave occasion to the following sermon; in which the obligations of Christians to preserve the character of the *quiet in the land*, are stated and recommended.

The discourse was addressed to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, composed of persons, who have not yet learned, with philosophizing Christians, to reject

the authority, or explain away the obvious meaning, of the inspired writings.

Being a dissenting Minister, I have with heart-felt concern known, that the religious, and political sentiments of Dissenters at large have been misunderstood, and misrepresented by the publick in general. The origin of this prejudice I do not attribute to former animosity—to jealousy, in the king, or his ministers—to bigotry in bishops—or prejudice in church-men. No; the cause is to be found, in the conduct of individuals among *ourselves*; who, leaving the quiet duties of their profession, have *spoken, and written perverse things to draw away Disciples after them.*

It is a mournful fact, that a large body of modern Dissenters, under the sanction of reason and science falsely so called, have apostatized from the *doctrines* of the *reformation*; and some can vilify, in very opprobrious language, the *truths*, which their ancestors contended for, with *meekness of wisdom*, at the expence of their liberty, treasure, and blood. It is true,
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the reformers in Germany, and the champions in the cause of evangelical truth in England, both in the established Church, and among Non-conformists, were fallible men: let those also, who are *but men themselves*, recollect on whose ashes they trample, when they ridicule the sentiments held sacred by men of *tried integrity*, who, in their confessions, spoke and wrote, not the effusions of enthusiasm, but *words of truth and soberness*.

This sad apostasy of modern Non-conformists is to be ascribed to, at least, a partial denial of the inspiration of the scriptures, particularly the Epistles of St. Paul. We are not to be surprised, if men, who vacate the rule of faith in Jesus Christ, should be defective in deference, and in obedient regards to men, who are raised to offices of superior influence, for the purposes of civil order, and public good. The boundless liberty some have exercised in judging of theological subjects, is associated with opposition to the regulations of government, and impatience under re-

straints, very prudently imposed on persons separating from the established religion of their country.

I do venture to affirm, (though uncommissioned,) in the name of many of my brethren in the ministry, men—venerable for their years—of sound learning and exemplary piety—useful men, and highly esteemed in our churches—as well as in the name of a vast body of the laity—I affirm, that we greatly disapprove of the theological and political sentiments of those, who, (by a patent of their own creation,) style themselves *rational Dissenters*.

The disaffection to Government, expressed in toasts drank at Revolution Clubs—in Pamphlets—in Sermons—must not be imputed to the Dissenters as a Body: but to those of them, who have been corrupted by men of talents, who, (in this age of impaired subordination,) have been dignified with the appellation, of *Apostles of Liberty*.

I may add farther, there were not a few among the Dissenters, both of their clergy and laity, who disapproved of the manner,

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in which application was made to Parliament, for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The want of success, arose in a great measure, from the impression made, on the minds of Dignitaries in the Church, and members of the House of Commons, by the intemperate resolutions, framed, and carried at various County Meetings.

Very many serious Christians, in the established Church, as well as among Dissenters, are grieved that the Ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*, instituted purely for a spiritual end, should be perverted, and made to serve a secular purpose. Surely the Cross of Christ ought not to be insulted by persons, eager to press into the Temple of Mammon.

The British Legislature is accessible; subjects of this free country may petition; not contumeliously, but with decency, a corrected temper, and proper reverence for superiors. The number of respectable Dissenting Ministers was not small, who in the late application to Parliament, disap-
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proved

proved of blending religious and secular reasons, as grounds of complaint. They wished, as *Ministers*, to urge only, what they deemed a *profanation* of the *Lord's Supper*, as the argument for a repeal. For we do not find that the New Testament Church ever contended, in her proper character, for any share in the Government, or emoluments of worldly Kingdoms.

Others, having reason to believe, that some of our reformers were influenced by enmity against the doctrinal Articles of the established Church, and the Orthodoxy of her Liturgy; could not sacrifice their pious regard to truth, though in a church they had separated from, to the policy of men, who, with respect to God our Saviour, only consult to cast him down from his excellency.

Should application be again made to Parliament, the Members of that august Assembly may be assured, that the Dissenters are not unanimous, in desiring a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. I know many of the first character and opulence,
 who,

who, *all things considered*, with that what is at rest may not be disturbed.

If any should ask, what is my motive for writing this short address? for answer I can assure the public, I have no interest of avarice to promote; being contented with that abundance which is given me to enjoy. I have no interest of fame; I am satisfied in being known to that circle, where my professional duty calls me. I value human applause, when it is the echo of a sentence pronounced by my conscience, directed in its favourable verdict by the Holy Spirit, which is promised to them that believe.—Neither in writing this, do I give vent to party-zeal: allowedly I am not of any party, nor attached to any sect of religious professors, as an Island: I live in my affections on the great Christian Continent. Notwithstanding this declaration of liberality, I renounce all pretensions to the modern, harlot-like, charity, which opens her arms to promiscuous lust. I desire no charity besides that which *rejoiceth in the truth*.—I must add, I am not
impelled

impelled by fear ; I have no apprehension of danger, for I have not raised the people, neither in the Synagogues, nor in the City, neither against the law, nor yet against Cæsar have I offended any thing at all. While really employed in the quiet duties of my profession, my religious political Creed forbids all fear of man. *I believe that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. I believe the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. Lastly, I believe that he who trusteth in the Lord, and doeth good, shall dwell in the land, and verily he shall be fed.*

In writing these pages, I have been influenced by *Justice* to the Dissenters as a Body, to my Brethren in the Ministry, and to myself : and I have also aimed to disabuse, and set free from mistake, the minds of my superiors and fellow-subjects, who may think this address and the following sermon, worthy of their attention. As to composition, &c, excuse is necessary, but I make no apology for the sentiments they contain,

Should

Should any persons give themselves the trouble of taking publick notice of what I have advanced, let them not construe my future silence, (for I am determined to reply to no one,) into conviction. In considering the following subject, I have disregarded the theories of modern political divines and philosophers. The ideas of scripture, on the duty of Christians with respect to politics, I have endeavoured to collect. And the dictates of inspired wisdom, relative to every obligation, I hope to carry with me unaltered to the Grave.

J. CLAYTON.

Highbury-Place, Islington,
July 30, 1791.

L U K E xii. 14.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, MAN, WHO
MADE ME A JUDGE, OR A DIVIDER
OVER YOU ?

THE Jewish and Christian religions
are one, in their origin and design.
They are from heaven, and intended to
promote the glory of God, in the salvation
of guilty man.

The religion of the Jews was, in a peculiar manner, interwoven with all their worldly affairs, and connected with their national Government. In this respect, the Gospel Dispensation is essentially different; it is an institution intended to bless all nations. It is spiritual, the worship it enjoins is simple and easy, and if liberty of conscience be granted, all its exterior order may be regarded, under every kind of human Government.

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Whenever the Gospel is secularized, it is debased, misrepresented, and, in proportion to the quantity of foreign infusions, is the efficacy of this saving health diminished. The doctrine Jesus Christ taught, the example he set before us, and the genuine spirit of his religion prove this. Whilst our Lord was discoursing to his disciples, *one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* This worldly-minded man broke in upon our Saviour, to beg he would decide a controversy between him and his brother, about an hereditary estate. Our Lord answered him, in the words of our text. “ Friend, whatsoever your notions may be of the Messiah’s temporal power; I make no pretences to interfere in an affair of this nature. My business lies in spiritual things, relating to the inheritance of eternal life, and not in secular concerns. And doubtless, were I to meddle in them, some would say to me as the Egyptian said to Moses “ (Exod.

“ (Exod. ii. 14.) *Who made thee a judge
“ and a divider over us?*

Christ, as a servant, took the utmost heed to his instructions, and herein he left his apostles an example; and he is to be imitated by his ministers and followers to the end of time: particularly, like him, are they to avoid interfering in the concerns of those, who are invested with authority, for the purpose of Government.

It is my intention, to consider from this text,

- I. The nature of the Christian Religion, in its relation to civil government.
 - II. Inquire how far ministers of religion, and private Christians, may interfere in the politicks of the country where they live.
 - III. The bad consequences, which may be expected from ministers of Christ interfering in politicks, beyond the bounds of scripture permission.
- K The nature of the Christian Religion, in its relation to civil government.

(1) It

(1) It is distinct from, and independent of, human legislation. The memorable words of our Saviour to Pilate comprehend much, *My kingdom is not of this world*. Not of this world, in its origin, manner of introduction, means of support, laws, tendency, or in its final issue. Mere human power can neither promote, nor destroy true religion. On a perusal of the Beatitudes, who will conclude, that the power of magistrates can produce *poverty of spirit, contrition, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, &c.* Nor can all the power of created beings extirpate from the heart the dispositions, on which Christ pronounces his benedictions.

The Potentates of this world may, by their smiles and frowns, increase or diminish the number of visible professors of religion. But true Christians are God's workmanship, formed to loyalty and persevering subjection to their King, by his truth and Spirit. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

When

When human governments are tolerant, and do not harrafs those, who claim a right of worshipping according to their conviction, the supreme Magistrate of heaven ought to be praised; and the powers, he has ordained on earth to maintain order, should, *in things civil*, be obeyed.

(2) Jesus Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in temporal affairs, especially in the concerns of the then existing government: the text presents a lucid proof of this. He frequently discovered more than mortal wisdom, in his answers to the questions, which his enemies, with captious subtlety, proposed to him. We must be struck with the following passages, which are to our present purpose. Matt. xxii. 15—22.

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. They said, Master, thou teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us therefore what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they

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brought

brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's: and unto God the things that are God's. When they heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

Another scripture, which the licentious patrons of concupiscible passions have wrested to their own destruction, deserves attention. John viii. *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery. Having mentioned her crime, and the judgment of the law of Moses, they said, What sayest thou? This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him before the Roman governor. Then having dispersed the woman's accusers, by an address to their consciences; he said to her, Hath no man condemned thee? And she said no man, Lord. Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. He did not condemn her as a magistrate judicially. In other respects he did condemn her as an adulteress,*

adulterers, and if she died impenitent, he will condemn her at the last day, with all other whoremongers and adulterers.

(3) The writings of the apostles will shew the genius of Christianity in its relation to human government.

Without determining what form of government is to be regarded, the apostle Paul commands Christians to respect legislative Constitutions as they are found. Rom. xiii. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. The Ruler is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: He is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* A Christian is required by the same authority, not to defraud government of its revenue. *For this cause pay you tri-*

bute also. Render to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

St. Paul enjoins prayer for magistrates.

1 Tim. ii. *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men : for kings, and for all that are in authority : that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* St. Paul does not re-

commend, like modern apostles, struggling for liberty. 1 Cor. vii. 21. *Art thou called, being a servant ? Care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.*

However as Paul, in the opinion of some, reasons crudely ; I will refer you to Peter, 1 Ep. ii. 13. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; whether it be to the King as supreme ; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

(4) I shall appeal to the spirit of religion, and its genuine tendencies, as experienced by the Christian in his retired hours. All persons,

persons, sincere in their professions of regard to God, will be occasionally alone for the purpose of devotion. The world loses much of its influence, when an object of solitary contemplation: especially, when the mind is fixed, by prayer and meditation, on the perfections, and grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ. I ask you, who make conscience of entering into your closets, and shutting your doors, and praying to your Father, who seeth in secret: What subjects then most interest you? Are not factious passions hushed? The undue heat you felt in political disputation—was it not in the cool, reflecting, religious hour, remembered with sorrow? Did not earthly kingdoms, and worlds vanish like a dim taper, before the beams of the uncreated sun? Did not your heart expand with this one wish, which brake forth in the language of prayer, Thy kingdom come? That kingdom and its concomitants in the temper and life of Christians, include all that is friendly to the happiness of states, cities, and families. He who knows what religion

is, as it is experienced in the heart of genuine believers, will find this precept easy of performance ; *Study to be quiet and mind your own Business.*

II. How far may ministers of religion, and private Christians, interfere in the Politicks of the country where they live.

(1) A Christian is required to abide in his calling. 1 Cor. vii. 20. *Let every man abide in the same calling, wherein he was called.* Hereditary and elected legislators, in England, are not commanded to quit their station and duty. Inferior magistrates are not required to relinquish their office. The private citizen, who has by the laws a right of suffrage, may dispose of his vote according as his judgment shall determine it to be best.

Society, under the wisest of human regulations, will degenerate : and there will be periods, when associated bodies must be resolved again into their first principles. So far as Revolutions are parts of God's plan of government, a Christian is not to hinder

hinder such changes in states, as promise an increase of happiness to mankind. But no where, in the New Testament, can a Christian find countenance in becoming a forward, active man, in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.

(2) Ministers of Christ may interfere, as peace-makers; and by proper methods should counteract the spirit of Faction, raised by persons who seem born to vex the state.

Jesus Christ was *meek and lowly in Heart*, as appeared in all his conduct upon earth: he is the *Prince of Peace*; his servants are predestinated to be conformed to his image.

The dispensation of the Gospel is intended to correct the savage, ferocious tempers of men; the change it produces is most beautifully described in *Isai. ch. xi.* And that wisdom, which is not pure, and peaceable, is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Should men on board a leaky ship rise against authority, he who could quell the mutiny, and engage all hands at the pumps, would most certainly act a wiser part, and

shew himself more the friend of all : than the man, who, siding with one party, should perpetuate disagreement, and occasion the neglect of preserving duty.

Which leads me to observe,

(3) That in the convulsive circumstances of a nation, ministers of Christ are to bring the charge against sin, and to excite Christians to prayer and repentance. They are not to vent displeasure against *Men and Measures* ; but to prefer an indictment against sin, as the parent of all our misery. God *distributeth sorrow in his anger* : and elsewhere the Bible speaks thus of calamity ; Amos iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* God's providence extends to all creatures, and all their actions. A sparrow does not fall unnoticed. If so, events, which respect the lives and properties of men, are under his control. We cannot suppose a riot happens by chance, when we read a scripture like this ; Zech. xiv. 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them, and they shall lay hold*

bold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. If an insurrection be quelled; God is there—whoever the instruments are; He stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people.

We may apply what *Lord Bacon* says on seditions and troubles, to Christian pastors.

“ Shepherds of people had need know the
 “ kalenders of tempests in the state, which
 “ are commonly greatest when things grow
 “ to equality; as natural tempests are
 “ greatest about the equinoctial. And as
 “ there are certain hollow blasts of wind,
 “ and secret swellings of the sea before a
 “ tempest, so are there in states. Libels
 “ and licentious discourses against the state,
 “ when they are frequent and open; and in
 “ like sort, false news often running up and
 “ down to the disadvantage of the state,
 “ and hastily embraced, are amongst the
 “ signs of troubles.”

Let ministers of Christ mark the gathering storm, and direct their hearers to look
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beyond second causes, and immediate agents, to the hand of God, which is lifted up. Exhort them to *prayer* and *humiliation* for sin, as the infallible means of safety *from*, or *in* the day of evil.

(4) Ministers of Christ should remind Christian subjects, of the advantages of their situation; they have ample scope for this, who inhabit this favored island. What temporalities has the *Church of Christ* to expect on scripture grounds, in the present world? It is the *Mother of Harlots*, which says, *I sit a queen and shall see no sorrow*.

The whole visible Church once consisted of a company of brick-makers in Egypt. And the temporal condition of persons most distinguished for faith, is recorded in the xith chapter of the Hebrews. Under the New Testament, Christ predicts constant opposition to his Church, from the *gates of hell*; that is, by *force* or *fraud*, by *persecution* or *heresy*, the Church shall be assailed, by satan and his emissaries: but both as a *lion*, and as a *serpent*, he shall be defeated. Also it is said; *In the world ye shall have tribulation*;

tion ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Who are we, that we should have assigned us this pleasant land, so goodly a heritage ?

Christians, tell me, what part of the world do you prefer to Great Britain ? What hardships do you suffer ? Are your shops and warehouses less frequented than your neighbours, because of your religion ? Is your reputation diminished on the exchange, because you are Protestant Dissenters ? Have you not goodly apparel, full tables, well-built houses, splendid furniture, and from small beginnings, affluence of riches ? Many of you have flourishing families, they attend you to publick worship, (delightful sight !) unmolested, like a flock. O Lord ! let our children live before thee !—These advantages flow from God, and are dispensed to us under the government of a king, who has more personal and social virtue, than any prince in Europe.

I might contrast this age of advantage with the times which passed over our ancestors ; but the grateful tear is already starting

starting from the eyes of some, whose forefathers, and the pains and penalties they suffered for conscience sake, are not forgotten. Enough has been said to prove that a minister is in his duty, when he puts his hearers in mind, *To be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work. To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.* Titus iii. 1, 2.

(5) We should be in our duty, were we to remind most common people, that they are very ignorant of matters of *fact*, and *right*, relative to government. My observation in many companies, has forced this conviction into my bosom, that the most ignorant are generally the fiercest and most violent. Certain information cannot be collected from the rumour, and paper, of the day. Let conscious ignorance or wisdom make us quiet; *for a man of understanding is of a cool spirit.* Prov. xvii. 27.

And I must haste,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To shew the bad consequences, which are likely to follow a Minister's interference in politicks, beyond the limits of Scripture permission.

(1) It is disreputable, and brings the reality of his religion under just suspicion. This will not seem uncharitable, when we look at the company he is in: For who are the persons that usually embark? Are they the spiritual, humble, useful teachers, who *travail in birth until Christ be formed* in the hearts of their hearers? No; they are philosophical opposers of the grand peculiarities of christianity. In the days of *Jude* (for there is an uniformity in depravity as well as in virtue) the persons who *despised dominions and spake evil of dignities*; were those, who *denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*. There are indeed among sound preachers, political men; but these, for the most part, are idle, gossiping, convivial persons, who are, it must be allowed, very orthodox on Sundays; yet live the rest of the week as much out of

of the spirit of their profession, as the most erroneous in opinion. Will there be, at the day of judgment, any difference in the final allotment of the man who dishonors Christ in *notion*, and him who dishonors Christ in *practice*?

Is it not disreputable, and suspicious to be associated with such Divines? for these are usually our politicians. The Christian Minister, is engaged in a warfare of infinite moment. And it was once said to Timothy; *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

(2) The political minister forfeits divine protection, by leaving his own ground. The charge of undue interference in human governments has been brought against the Church, almost in every age. *This city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces*, is an epitome of many subsequent accusations, which were for the most part preferred in vain. When schemes were concerted to extirpate the Church on

this ground; God permitted the plans of the enemy to ripen so far, as gave opportunity of displaying his power in blasting them. But no such providential interposition is to be expected, to rescue persons, who in opposition to government, only stop short of actual revolt.

When led by officious zeal, from the quiet duties of their profession into the Senator's province: God may permit the unhallowed boisterous passions of others, which resemble their own, to chastise them for their misconduct.

Should a foreigner, with his ship, enter one of our harbours; at a time when the inhabitants of this Island were agitated by jarring opinions—You would judge it was his duty, to make the best of the times, to land his cargo, to dispose of it, and to retire quietly about his business. Should he, instead of such prudent conduct, indiscreetly meddle with matters out of his province; and a lawless rabble should burn his ship: we ought to regret the unjustifiable outrage; but we should not wonder, because
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he came out of his place. It would greatly aggravate the offence of this busy-body ; if he were tolerated, not only to land from his ship the spices of Arabia, but the most poisonous drugs. This unrestrained Liberty, abused to purposes hostile to the general content of the Nation, must lessen the pity which humanity under every species of suffering claims. After all, should this meddling Captain say, the burning of his ship was persecution for righteousness sake ; we must bewail the infatuation in which his folly terminates.

Let Ministers mind their professional duty, and he, whose authority gives them commission, will take care of them. While they *teach men all that he has commanded* ; the promise is, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* If he be with them ; *No man can set on them to hurt them.*

(3) Another bad consequence is, that a Minister, instead of edifying his hearers, will kindle in them unsanctified passions, or unite them by a bond which supercedes the proper cement of the Church. The
political

political Preacher cannot suppose, all his auditors are of one mind; should he take a decided part, the persons differing in opinion are supplied with new matter for disputation, and in general for increasing disaffection. Should he, and all his congregation be agreed in politicks; meddling with the subject at all is likely to destroy the true religious bond of union. This bond is *Love for the truth's sake, which dwells in real believers, and will be in them forever. Seeing, ye have purified your souls, by obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.* Where this bond of union is superseded, by concord in ecclesiastical, and civil politicks only, there may be an association of persons and a semblance of religion, but the vital animating principle of the true Church is lost.

The conversation of political Ministers, in their private visits, is generally such as excludes all pastoral inquiries and counsels, and tends to induce a wrong spirit in the

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persons

persons visited, which may prove a lasting injury to the religious character of their posterity. In a minister's ordinary intercourse with his flock, this command is of great importance ; *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.*

(4) Another evil consequence, and the last I shall mention, is ; that Ministers have destroyed, by political interference, their personal comfort. A man may put on the *face* of pleasure, but his heart must be full of pain, who by his imprudent conduct, has diminished his reputation, and made the situation where Providence had placed him uneasy to himself, if he be not obliged to quit it intirely. Pride may prompt him to vindicate his compliance with the solicitations, which made him active in an Election for

a Member of Parliament; but secretly he feels the keenest sorrow: his intention at the time was to serve his Country.—Alas! the consequence of this uncommanded patriotism is bitterness all his remaining days. Should he be deemed an enemy for speaking religious truth, the Spirit of Glory and of Christ rests upon him: but if he make any man his adversary by political meddling, he has no consolation provided for him in the Scriptures, except repentance.

The *Clergy* of the established Church being connected with the State, have some excuse if they take a part in state affairs; not but it would be prudent even in them, to make excuse unnecessary, by observing a firm neutrality, although his *Lordship*, or the *Esquire*, should urge them to canvass at an Election. But for the interference of dissenting Ministers, no apology can be offered; because the grand principle of their separation lies in the unworldly nature of our Saviour's Kingdom.

To conclude,

(1) By way of improvement, we may observe, the science of Government erects a stage, on which man acts out his character, and discovers great depravity of heart. Policy in free states is a subject, generally interesting to men ; *Men*, I say, for *Women*, (with very few exceptions,) are disgusted with the violence generally attending the discussion. Their gentle nature makes them fly from the clamour and invective of fierce debate.

The page of history, where we have presented to us the beginning, progress, and perfection of empires, and their gradual decline and fall ; shews us man, in a point of view truly humbling. Smooth good-breeding among courtiers may gloss over and conceal part of the deformity ; the season of trial takes away the disguise. And we may be assured nothing but the Gospel and its grace can produce uncomplying integrity of character. Bring your hearts, sinners, to this gracious constitution, displayed in the Cross of Christ ; it
will

will not teach you to *cover* your natural and acquired corruption ; it promises and conveys cleansing from all unrighteousness.

(2) Some may object ; “ Do you mean, “ Sir, to inculcate the long-exploded “ doctrine of non-resistance and passive “ obedience ? ” I do not reason out of human systems, nor am I speaking in the House of Commons ; but in the *Church*, and in a Society which respects the example of Christ, submits to his teaching, and believes the Apostles were inspired, when they commanded Christians to obey Magistrates ; those that *were*, not such only as they thought, *ought to be*.

What I have advanced amounts to a vindication of ourselves, and proves our sentiments and temper will preserve us what we are, *good subjects*. You will bear me witness I never introduce politicks into the Pulpit : thus much seemed necessary at the present juncture ; when odious imputations, incurred by the default of a few, threaten to sink into disrepute the Dissenters without distinction. We are
not

not Republicans: their system is too liable to breed confusion, to conciliate our esteem. — It is too congenial to corrupt nature in man, which loves tumult and riot, and says, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

Without great virtue common-wealths are seditious; and in proportion to the prevalence of levelling sentiments, subordination will be destroyed; and the baneful leaven will overturn domestic order, and go near to annihilate the tranquility of every family. May our Country be ever saved from that “worst of Tyrants, an “usurping Croud!”

So far are Dissenters from esteeming lightly the King; they are among his Majesty's most affectionate and loyal subjects. When a calamity which has seldom befallen a crowned Head, once filled with undissembled grief the Nation; this Society was the first which purposely met to seek God's merciful interposition, in behalf of our beloved Sovereign. And your example of Christian patriotism, my Brethren,

thren, was followed by very many Dissenting Churches.

(3) We may ascribe warmth in political affairs, among Professors of religion, to a decay of the general principle of christianity in the heart. When any one makes a practice of speaking evil of the *Higher Powers*; we do not comment with uncharitable rigour on his conduct, when we affirm, that he has lost fervor of affection as a Christian. Does he not omit reading the Scriptures, and Prayer, both in his family and closet? Is his understanding improved, and are his passions, the springs of action, touched by contemplating the Cross of Christ? No; we are sure the meddling political Christian must be unacquainted, with that scriptural devotion, which meliorates the whole soul, and determines it to one grand point.

Persons, who do not attempt daily to look God, and their own consciences in the face, in solitude, will not feel the force of this reasoning: to them I offer a quotation from a *Philosopher*, who on this subject says.

says. " The science of Salvation and Government are very different. The doctrines of the Gospel have but one object in view, which is the universal salvation of mankind. Their liberties and properties here below have nothing to do with it. The Gospel inspires humanity rather than patriotism, and tends rather to the forming of men than citizens. Patriotism and humanity are two virtues incompatible with each other, in any great degree, and particularly in a whole people. The legislature who would unite them both, will obtain neither one nor the other. Their union never was, nor ever will be, known ; because it is contrary to nature, and because it is IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE TWO OBJECTS TO ONE PASSION."

(4) Christians, you believe the state of man to be, as it is, represented in the Scriptures. *Yea, that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live.* If you are what you profess to be, *you are not of the world.* Maintain

tain your separation. Stand upon your own hallowed ground. *Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious politician, thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare for thy soul.*

There is one way in which you may all interfere in the Government of your Country, viz, by *Prayer* to God: by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice. By Prayer you may influence the Council of the Cabinet.—You may inspire our Generals with wisdom, and our Troops with valour. The haughty world may deem you a cypher in Society: yet she may be indebted to you, poor Christians, for her peace, fruitful showers, plenteous harvests, and prosperous commerce. Though disregarded, you are the pillars of the earth, when in solitude you ask mercy for the many, who never pray for themselves. Remember, Christians, whose servants you are, and look daily to him, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Amen.

F I N I S.

